

Q&A Responses for Friends of White's Woods, Inc.

James M. Dixon – Candidate for White Township Supervisor

The Friends of White's Woods recently submitted a questionnaire to local candidates. Below are the responses that James provided.

Q1. What is the major issue of this campaign and how will you address it?

A. I have two major issues in this campaign. The first is regional police service. When I first began my campaign I was reading in various newspapers and hearing on television news reports about several bills being presented in the General Assembly in Harrisburg. These bills were going to make municipalities pay for state police service, which is currently free to those townships. After doing my research on each bill and finding out the excessive amount to be paid to the State Police, I was concerned the township would receive the same service we currently have, which per the current supervisors is "adequate". If we pay \$1.5 million dollars and receive only \$13,000 back from State Police fines, do you think that is "adequate"? I have taken the liberty to speak to the Indiana Borough Police Chief Sutton and Sergeant Clement about the day to day activities, manpower to run a police department, the increasing number of drugs being transported through White Township, and the dedication the officers will provide to the Township. I felt very informed and feel that if Indiana Borough and White Township joined forces with police service, we would have not only a protected community and safer neighborhoods but also a major advantage against drugs in our community.

The second issue in my campaign is the excessive timbering of White's Woods. After reading the extensive 2007 plan, I was appalled as to the destruction of this nature park. The excessive timbering of 229 of the 245 acres, the damage to the roads around the park, the disruption of the neighbors living around and to the park, the displacement of wild animals, the destruction of local vegetation, and the 10 year process it would take. While doing my research about White's Woods, I contacted several knowledgeable people in forestry and land preservation. With the current economic times, if the timbering began the current supervisors would only get pennies of what they budgeted in 2007. If work began, money would have to be paid out to maintain the roads to and from the park. Where do the current supervisors believe that money will come from? During the investigation I have been informed that the property was purchased with Project 70 money. In that documentation no timbering is to be done on the property. The land was purchased as a nature park and should remain a nature park. I have the philosophy that Mother Nature has always taken care of herself and she will take care of this park. With all the nature parks in Pennsylvania, I am opposed to lumbering crews going in and timbering them.

Q2. How will you assure that citizens can express their wishes or concerns, and further assure that those concerns will be seriously considered by Township officials?

A. I will have available for all residents in White Township **and** Indiana Borough an email address to which they can send their questions and concerns. I will respond within a 48 hour period as I currently do on my campaign website. I currently work as a manager of the Bon-Ton Department Store so I feel I will also have concerned citizens come to me and voice their issues. I will always listen to each and every citizen and do the best to make their concerns heard. I am

known at work to be “the voice of the sales associates”. I will do the same if I am elected Supervisor. That is why I am running for Supervisor. In the past the current Supervisors have not listened or taken into consideration what each individual has communicated to them. Some of the current supervisors have been in their position for 3, 4, 5, and even 6 terms. I have been at the supervisors’ meetings and have spoken my concerns, but because I am not sitting on the Board I have no voice. I hope November 3, 2009 will change that.

Q3. What is your vision for White Township, especially with regard to the issue of how quality of life contributes to community economic well-being? Where do you want to see the township in 5 or 10 years?

A. Currently, White Township is at a stalemate, but when the Kovalchick convention center is completed, White Township will experience growth. With that growth, the Township will need to execute proper zoning ordinances. Currently, there are no zoning ordinances within the Township. There will be growth over several years on Wayne Avenue. We as a Township need to make sure the businesses that open up are in industrial areas and not in residential areas. The businesses on Wayne Avenue need to be cosmetically uniform to help maintain the integrity of a “small town” since Wayne Avenue is a major thoroughfare to downtown Indiana. With Indiana University of Pennsylvania expanding the Township also needs to consider the residential areas as well. Currently, any single family dwelling can be turned into multiple units to rent out to college students. We all know that if this happens, property values will decline as well as the neighboring homes’ values. I would propose that residential zoning be in place as soon as possible.

Within the next 5 to 10 years, if my two major issues are achieved, the children in our schools would be educated by the police service in regards to D.A.R.E. and Child Restraint Education. We would minimize drugs as well as gang activity moving into our neighborhoods because the police would be on patrol and cracking down on gang activity. The crime statistics would be down and we would be recognized as a safe community in which to live and raise a family. With regards to White’s Woods, I would like to do more research into the history of the area and build a replica of the original home settlement and have education programs in the house about our community and its heritage.

Q4. While the township has made great strides in providing opportunities for more active recreation (the White Township Recreation Complex), other, more passive forms of recreation (hiking, picnics, bird watching, etc.) have received less attention. Do you have plans to acknowledge the varying needs and desires of citizens by providing recreation opportunities of different types?

A. Yes, I do have plans I would like to implement if I am elected Supervisor. One would be having an annual “X Games”. While I was campaigning at Mack Park during the primary I was looking at the skating park adjacent to the building. I noticed our local kids were doing tricks and stunts I have only seen on television. Recently, I went back to the skating park and spoke to some of the kids. I advised them I was interested in doing an annual “X Games” for local children in Indiana County. They thought it was a great idea. I did advise them it was in the thought process but I would like to make it a reality. After leaving the skating park I stopped by one of the local bike shops and spoke to the owner. He was very interested in becoming a

sponsor. I feel if this activity did happen it would give our local children an avenue to succeed at something they love to do and bring more attention to Mack Park.

Another project I would be involved in is the Chevy Chase Community Center. In recent years the current supervisors have ignored this part of White Township. I have had several meetings there as well as attended different events at the Center. I feel this “gem” is being overshadowed by the Recreation Complex. I have spoken to personnel at the center and they would like to grow but do not have the support of the current supervisors. If I were elected, I would give as much effort to the Chevy Chase Center as the other supervisors give the Recreation Center. I would like to construct a baseball field for the less fortunate in the neighborhood and even have donations of bats, balls, and gloves to be loaned out for anyone who wanted to play baseball. We need to make this a “whole” community and not just one of parts.

Q5. What is your vision for White’s Woods Nature Center? Where do you want to see White’s Woods in 5, 10 years?

A. In 5 to 10 years I would like to see White’s Woods have a replica of the house that once stood on the grounds. This would be an education center to which local and county school children can come and learn about the vegetation, wildlife, and the history of White’s Woods. I would also like it to be a center that presented the history of Indiana and how it became the town it is today.

Q6. Describe the training and experience that qualifies you for this position?

A. I have a degree in Accounting from Georgia State University. This training will help me in dealing with budget issues, spending within our means, and making sure we are adjusting to economic times. I owned my own business for 15 years, dealt with changes and adjusted to each one of them. I currently am a manager of the Bon-Ton Department Store and deal with issues that need to be addressed on a daily basis. I am able to adjust to what needs need to be met at that time. I have also been in the military as a 2nd Lt in the Army National Guard. The training I received has made me the understanding and committed man I am today. I am a compassionate person, willing to take the time to listen and understand the issues. If I do not know the answer I will be honest and tell you I don’t know, BUT I will find out and make sure I get back to you. Most of my training to become the next Supervisor will be hard work, dedication, and the understanding of each individual I speak to.